Sample Discussion/Writing Prompts


**Introduction**

Feminist theory is generally taught at the upper level and asks students to engage with sophisticated social and political theory. Our sample prompts devote attention to definitions of main concepts, logics, and frameworks to foster the development of students’ skills in explication and analysis within a transnational comparative feminist framework (See Reading 36: Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles”). In what follows, we begin with a brief discussion of questions that may be useful throughout the course. The majority of this guide provides specific prompts for section introductions and reviews and each reading in the order they appear in the anthology. We have included three types of questions. The first asks students to articulate the arguments made in the reading. The second asks students to explicate where and how the readings enter the debates and conversations in feminist theory. And the third (where applicable) asks students to compare and contrast arguments of several specific readings. Some of the sample prompts are designed to guide student reading, while others may be useful for spurring small or large group discussions, or for written assignments and essay exams. We have made an effort to be broadly inclusive of the rich range of topics and issues encompassed by the *Reader*. At the same time, these questions are only suggestive and reflect our individual teaching styles. We hope you find them useful as you generate your own approaches to teaching feminist theories.

**Questions to Consider Throughout the Course**

Ask students to ferret out underlying and/or unexamined assumptions in essays and delineate the

- What conversation does this article belong to?
- What exigency sparked this article?
- What points of view is the writer pushing against?
- What audience is the writer imagining? What change is the writer hoping to bring about in the audience’s beliefs or actions?
- As a reader in this time and place, how are you similar or different from the author’s intended audience?
- Decide through your own critical thinking, will you succumb or resist the article’s persuasive power? Why?
- Another useful method asks students to explain what they have learned about feminist genealogies/histories to a hypothetical novice learner.
- Select the word or phrase that captures the primary conceptual contribution of the article to feminist theory. Write a paragraph, with the authors definition of the word or phrase as you understand it and explaining why you chose that word or phrase.

To the above questions, we add these questions that are applicable to all essays. They include:

- How does the author define the political problem of women and/or gender-based oppression?
- How does the author define the terms: gender, sex, and sexuality; and feminist and/or feminism?
- How does the author’s argument draw on (or contest) the core concepts of women’s
experiences, “the personal is political,” difference, [and/or] intersectionality?

- Does the author conceptualize gender in isolation from other dimensions of power/oppression, or does the author utilize the core concept of intersectionality to theorize gender relations?

- Does the author place the specific issue they discuss within a social location [and/or] geographic context? If so, what is that location/context?

- Does the author place the specific issue they discuss within a temporal [and/or] political context? If so, what is that context?

- How does the author narrate the history of feminist engagement on the specific issue they discuss?

- What emotions are archived in the article? What emotions are activated in readers?

For semester-long projects, we have two suggestions:

- Many of the essays refer to movements and events that students could explore in greater depth. There is also much information about local histories of several regions presented in the essays. Research projects could ask students to investigate the wider social, political, or intellectual context in which an essay was written, [and/or] to investigate the contemporary situation in those specific locations.

- This suggested final project must be started at the beginning of the course. In the first week, ask students to write about their perspective on feminism. Collect and retain these essays. At the end of the semester, return the essays and ask students to write a reflexive paper about how their views have changed, deepened, developed over the course of the semester. Where have their ideas changed? Where have their perspectives become more nuanced and sophisticated? How would they describe their perspectives at the end of the
course? If your syllabus follows the order in which the essays are arranged in the Reader, the final project can also be designed to build on earlier assignments in which students synthesize what they have learned about the conceptual frameworks presented in each of the sections of the Reader. In this way, students will have a number of previous assignments to draw upon for the final project, which can help them to develop a more nuanced and specific final project.

Section I Theorizing Feminist Times and Spaces

Section Introduction

- How do the editors encourage readers to think about feminist times and spaces?
- What genealogy of the core feminist concepts of gender, difference, women’s experiences, “the personal is political,” and intersectionality do the editors provide in the Section Introduction?
- How does their account build on Elsa Barkley Brown’s concept of multiple simultaneous feminist stories?
- **As a section review,** ask students to draw on Section I readings to compose an account of mid-twentieth century feminism, which reflects the multiple simultaneous feminist stories of that period.
- **As a section review,** ask students to sort the readings according to how the authors use the core concepts, and/or whether the authors perpetuate or contest a normative feminist subject who is a white, middle-class, Western, heterosexual woman.

Feminist Movements

1. Yosano Akiko, “The Day the Mountains Move”

- What is the metaphoric resonance Akiko constructs between women and mountains? How
does this metaphor work to frame the power of women’s movement?

2. Nancy Hewitt, “Re-Rooting American Women’s Activism: Global Perspectives on 1848”
- Hewitt’s article disentangles the Seneca Falls Convention from the history of suffrage by re-situating it within the events of 1848. Why in her view is this important? What alternative to conventional accounts of “first wave feminism” does her article provide?
- By focusing more broadly on the world of 1848, Hewitt provides a richer account of this signal event of “first wave feminism.” In particular, she highlights connections developed between anti-slavery and women’s rights advocacy. Discuss two aspects of this history that you learned from the reading.
- How, according to Hewitt, are women’s rights and respectability connected in this period? How did the rights and evaluations of respectability change for white women, Mexican-American, and Native American women in this period?

3. Linda Nicholson, “Feminism in ‘Waves’: Useful Metaphor or Not?”
- Why, according to Nicholson, was the wave metaphor useful in the 1960s? Why has it outlived its usefulness? What metaphor does she prefer to use to represent gender activism in the present moment? Why?
- What explanation does she give for why some aspects of feminism in the 1960s–1980s flourished, while others did not?
- How does she define liberal feminism? Why, according to her, did it flourish while other forms did not, and what is its continuing appeal in today’s climate?

4. Becky Thompson, “Multiracial Feminism: Recasting the Chronology of Second Wave
Feminism

- What is the conventional narrative of second wave feminism, according to Thompson? Why does she call this hegemonic feminism? And why, in her opinion, is it insufficient in telling the story of multiracial feminism?
- How does the story that Thompson tells of mid-twentieth century feminism challenge the conventional narrative of second wave feminism?
- What insights about coalitions as a means of building social justice movements emerge from multiracial feminism? What directives does multiracial feminism offer for making cross-racial sisterhood “really powerful”?


- How does Basu define the local and the global in relation to feminism and women’s movements? How have North–South tensions around the meanings of feminism shaped the phases of international feminist relationships that she outlines?
- How has the notion that women’s rights are human rights influenced the strength of transnational feminist networks?
- In Basu’s view, what kinds of feminist campaigns are more likely to succeed in the burgeoning global civil society, and why? How does her advice about building feminist coalitions compare and contrast to Thompson’s?


- What does Cobble tell us about what occurred during the “missing wave” between “First
Wave Feminism” and “Second Wave Feminism”? In her view, why is it “missing” in the conventional narrative of twentieth-century feminism?

- What can we learn from this essay about the “multiple and competing visions of how to achieve women’s equality” being debated during this “missing wave”?

- How does Cobble’s argument fit with those of Hewitt and Thompson? What does Cobble add that is new? Might Cobble share Thompson’s stance that the wave metaphor has outlived its usefulness? Why, or why not?


- How does the “hegemonic heft” of the wave metaphor travel? How does it work to create belonging? How does it work to limit our understanding?

- What, according to Rowley is the purpose of feminist chronologies? How do her concepts of “the politics and conditions of emergence” and “whereabouts unknown” help us to “think about how we think about” feminist pasts?

- How might Rowley evaluate Hewitt’s or Thompson’s alternative accounts? Would she find them effective? Why or why not?

Local Identities and Politics

8. Muriel Rukeyser, “The Poem as Mask”

- What metaphors does Rukeyser use to describe the situation of women? How does she link the individual and collective in the poem?

- Compare and contrast the poetic imagery by which Akiko and Rukeyser articulate the movement of women.

9. T.V. Reed, “The Poetical is the Political: Feminist Poetry and the Poetics of Women’s Rights”
Drawing on Audre Lorde’s *Poetry is Not a Luxury*, what does Reed argue is the importance of silence, language, and poetics in feminist struggles? How and why is poetry key to feminist politics, consciousness-raising, [and/or] knowledge formation?

How does poetry bridge the divide between emotion and intellect and “the personal is political” in feminist and social theory? What examples does Reed provide of issues that new language helped to politicize?

What insights does Reed offer about the relationships among race, class, gender, and nation in movement poetry and feminist poetics?

Reread Rukeyser’s poem; does Reed’s analysis of its place in feminist poetics change the way you read it? How does the poem inform your reading of Reed’s analysis?


What does Kandiyoti mean by the term “patriarchal bargain,” and how does it help us refine our thinking about systems of male domination?

What does Kandiyoti mean when she says patriarchal bargains consist of both normal and crisis phases?

How does Kandiyoti suggest feminists should frame their analyses of women’s consciousness and struggle “in times of rapid social change”?

How, in Kandiyoti’s estimation, can feminist recognition of the shifting patriarchal bargains correct “ethnocentric” and “class-bounded” differences of “feminist consciousness”?

Compare and contrast Rowley’s “politics and conditions of emergence” and Kandiyoti’s “patriarchal bargains” in thinking through feminist pasts and feminist politics in our time and place.
11. Elizabeth Martinez, “La Chicana”

- What does Martinez mean when she says that La Raza and La Chicana originate in an act of rape? What does Martinez mean when she says that La Chicana experiences triple oppression? What are the three components?
- What are the four political perspectives on women’s situation that Martinez identifies with Chicanas? And what makes “the revolutionary Chicana” revolutionary?
- How does she locate La Chicana in relationship to mainstream American feminism? How does she locate the struggle of La Chicana in a global context?


- The authors talk about the simultaneity of oppressions. What do they mean? How is this simultaneity revealed in the lives of Black women and the (in)visibility of Black feminists?
- How have they used consciousness-raising to advance the feminist concept of “the personal is political”? How do they connect the person to the political? And how has this informed their definition of identity politics? How might this have informed the choice of name for their collective?
- In their view, how are the connections between racism and sexism different for Black women and white women? Why do they eschew separatism as a political practice?
- Compare and contrast Martinez’s concept of triple oppression with the Combahee River Collective concept of simultaneous oppression. How are they similar? And how do they help us understand the situation of women of color in the U.S.?


- What is Firestone’s definition of romanticism? And how does the “cultural tool” of romanticism reinforce sex-class?
- She identifies the key components of romanticism as sex privatization and the beauty ideal. How do they work? How do they contradict each other? And why is it so difficult to upend their power?

- How is romanticism amplified in Firestone’s time and place? In your view, is her argument relevant to the power of media in the contemporary period?

- What might Thompson or Martinez have to say about Firestone’s arguments?


- What link is Clarke drawing between a lesbian identity, the demands of radical feminism, and “liberation from coerced heterosexuality”? What does she describe as the grounds of resistance found in lesbianism?

- In what ways does Clark find inspiration from the Black Feminist Statement of the Combahee River Collective in her articulation of radical feminist thought? In what ways does her argument expand theirs?

- What might Clarke say about Kandiyoti’s “patriarchal bargains”?


- What is her account of the pro-sex work argument? What is her account of the radical abolitionist argument? Describe the tensions and contestations that she sees between her radical abolitionist approach and the liberal defense of sex work.

- According to Miriam, why are liberal notions of consent inadequate for understanding what is at stake in debates about sex work? In her view, how does male domination figure into liberal theory of consent?
- What is Miriam’s account of what happens in the exchange of money for sex? And why then does she support the abolition of sex work? Why is criminalizing only “coerced” prostitution inadequate in her view?

- Based on Miriam’s account of sex work, can it be seen as a form of “patriarchal bargain” in Kandiyoti’s definition?


- Koyama declares that the liberation of all women and beyond is intrinsically linked to trans liberation. Describe the pivotal moments in her argument and their support of this declaration.

- In particular, what does she tell us about the personal choices, the bargains, we make in the face of patriarchy? In what ways is her argument different from or similar to Kandiyoti’s concept of “patriarchal bargains”?

- In what ways does Koyama’s Postscript provide further evidence of her earlier statement: “Every time a group of women previously silenced begins to speak out, other feminists are challenged to rethink their idea of who they represent and what they stand for. Although this process sometimes leads to a painful realization of our own biases and internalized oppressions as feminists, it eventually benefits the movement by widening our perspectives and constituencies.”

**Section II Theorizing Intersecting Identities**

- What genealogy of the feminist conceptualization of intersectionality do the editors provide in the Section Introduction?

- What genealogy of race and colonialism do the editors provide in the Section Introduction?

- How do the editors define social processes in the Section Introduction?
- **As a section review**, ask students how feminist theorists have used the concepts of hegemony, Orientalism, historical materialism, and heteronormativity to complicate our understanding of gender and its intersections.

- **As a section review**, ask students to analyze if and how readings in the “Boundaries and Belongings” subsection exemplify the processes discussed in the “Social Processes/Configuring Differences” subsection.

### Intersectionality

17. *Bonnie Thornton Dill and Ruth Enid Zambrana, “Critical Thinking about Inequality: An Emerging Lens”*

- How does intersectional analysis draw on the work of women of color, the legacy of ethnic studies, social justice movements, [and/or] the experiences of marginalized peoples? Why, in the author’s opinion, is an intersectional analysis a better approach for studying inequality?

- What are the key theoretical interventions of intersectional analysis? What are the four domains of power unveiled by intersectional analysis? Provide an example of each.

- How is intersectional analysis linked to social justice? And what kinds of social justice work do the authors call for?

- How do the authors build on the insights of multiracial feminism as exemplified by Thompson, Martinez, and the Combahee River Collective?

18. *Jennifer Nash, “Re-Thinking Intersectionality*

- Articulate and briefly describe Nash’s four unresolved questions within intersectional theory.

- What are the underling assumptions of intersectional theory, as Nash sees them? And how
does engaging with these assumptions help us realize “the possibilities and potential of ‘inclusive’ theorizing”?

- From her perspective, what is missed when the connections between privilege and oppression are ignored? How, in her view, will attention to these connections make intersectional theory stronger?

- Place Nash’s interrogation of intersectional theory in conversation with the Combahee River Collective’s concept of multiple and interlocking oppressions. In what ways does Nash challenge the epistemic privilege of Black women? In what ways does she extend the Combahee River Collective’s analysis?

- Place Nash’s intersectional theory in conversation with that of Dill and Zambrana. In what ways does she extend or disagree with Dill and Zambrana’s analysis?


- According to Patil, what are the limitations of intersectional analysis, particularly regarding cross-border dimensions? How will refocusing on patriarchy help us to address these limitations?

- How does Patil define patriarchy? And what is her account of how patriarchy operated in U.N. debates about colonialism after World War II?

- In what ways does Patil argue that a move from the focus on classic patriarchy to that of modern patriarchy will help us more precisely examine how patriarchy organizes our lives, especially at the intersection of the local and the global?

- What are the similarities and differences between Nash’s and Patil’s critiques of intersectional theory?
- What might Nash make of Patil’s argument that feminist theorizing should refocus on the problem of patriarchy?

Social Processes/Configuring Differences

20. Heidi Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union”

- Why has the marriage of Marxism and feminism been an unhappy one in Hartmann’s view? How does Hartmann define feminist questions? How does she define the Marxist method of historical materialism? Why does she recommend using Marxist method to answer feminist questions?
- How does she define the “sex/gender system”? How are sexuality and gender formed through this system? How does “the sexual division of labor” figure into her definition of this system? How does race figure into Hartmann’s analysis?
- How are capitalism and patriarchy interconnected, according to Hartmann? What is the material base of patriarchy? And what conflicts does this create with capitalism? According to Hartmann, what insights can feminist analysis provide to struggles against capitalism?
- Compare and contrast Hartmann’s definition of patriarchy with Kandiyoti’s. How are they similar? How are they different?


- How does Parreñas define transnationalism, transmigrants, globalization, and diaspora? What does Parreñas argue are the benefits of a “multilocal perspective,” “diasporic perspective,” [and/or] women of color theory for understanding how gender is implicated in global
migration processes?

- What four institutions of migration does she identify as shaping the identities of Filipina migrant workers? How do their experiences with each of these institutions contribute to their experiences of dislocation and non-belonging?

- What does Parreñas mean by an “imagined global community”? How is it “imagined”? How do narratives of displacement shared in magazines contribute to the imagined global community of Filipino migrants?

- How does Parreñas build on and update Hartmann’s discussion of the relationship of capitalism and patriarchy? In particular, what does she argue is the structural link between feminization of wage labor and globalization?


- What is Orientalism? How does it depend on “imagined geography”? How does it inform colonial discourses? How has gender, stereotypical images of woman, and women’s sexuality figured into colonial projects of domination?

- What does she mean when she says that feminist scholarship is engaged scholarship? How does personal experience, difference, [and/or] positionality figure into her analysis?

- What dilemmas does Abu-Lughod identify for Middle East feminists producing knowledge of Middle East women? What are some examples of “tricky situations” faced by Arab feminist scholars? Should feminism be condemned as inauthentic or celebrated as indigenous? What are the politics of these two alternatives?

- How does the concept of Orientalism support intersectional gender analysis? What criticism of Orientalism does Abu-Lughod offer? What are the limits of the concept for Middle East feminist scholarship?

- How does Sinha define gender? How does she define nation? In what sense is “the nation” real, in what sense is it “invented”? What does she mean when she argues that the discourses of gender and nation are symbiotic?

- What, in her view, are key elements of familial and gendered imagery present in the constitution of the nation and its others? How does the heterosexual patriarchal family “naturalize” the “invented” nation? How has women’s sexuality been mobilized to define community boundaries?

- How does gender difference feature in national origin myths? In what ways has “the nation” been instrumental in defining normative standards of masculinity and femininity? According to Sinha, do women and men share equally in national symbolism, national belonging, national rights, [and/or] national obligations? Compare and contrast Sinha’s analysis of gendered belonging with Kandiyoti’s notion of the patriarchal bargain.

- How has gendered imagery been utilized within the discourses of empire and civilization? How does Sinha see the relationship among race, gender, and the “rule of colonial difference”? How does her analysis deepen our understanding of the “multiple axes of difference” identified by feminist theorists of color and the historical tensions between “First World” and “Third World” feminism?

- Both Sinha and Parreñas make use of Benedict Anderson’s concept of an “imagined community” to ground their discussion of belonging/nonbelonging. Compare and contrast how they use the concept and the value they attribute to it for transnational feminist scholarship.

24. *Andrea Smith, “Heteropatriarchy and the Three Pillars of White Supremacy”*

- According to Smith, in what ways do Orientalism and nationalism support white supremacy?
Explain how/why your chosen quotations are illustrative of the concept.

- Discuss Smith’s statement: “What keeps us trapped within our particular pillars of white supremacy is that we are seduced with the prospect of being able to participate in the other pillars.” What does this say about the complex co-constitution of privilege and oppression?

- How does Smith suggest we use her three pillars of white supremacy to develop more effective grounds for women of color/people of color organizing? Would Nash agree? Why or why not?

- What are the similarities and differences between Smith’s pillars and Patil’s focus on the primacy of a modern patriarchal analysis?


- What does Wittig define as the “myth of woman”? What does she mean when she says that woman is an “imaginary,” [and/or] a “political and ideological formation”? In Wittig’s view, why is the claim that “woman is wonderful” a trap for feminists?

- In Wittig’s argument, how does lesbian society destroy the notion of women as a natural group? In her view, are lesbians women? Why/why not? What does Wittig mean when she asserts that “to refuse to be a woman does not mean that one has to become a man”?

- To whom and to what do women belong, in her argument? Why? What is the mark of “the oppressor” with regard to sex difference? In her view, why are new definitions blossoming in the time and place in which she writes?

- What is Wittig’s solution to the situation of women? Why and how can we move “beyond the categories of sex”? Does destroying the categories of sex destroy the social system of heterosexuality? Does it destroy lesbianism?

- How is women’s subjectivity constructed for Wittig? What does it grow from? Compare and contrast Wittig’s and Parreñas’ concepts of subjectivity and agency.
- How does Wittig define the materialist feminist approach? How does Wittig analogize sex difference to race? What insights does this analogy support; what does it obscure?


- How does Connell define the terms gender relations, gender order, and gender practices?
  What are the social sites of key configurations of gender practice?

- What is her three-fold model for the structure of gender? How does this model draw on and extend core feminist concepts of experiences, the personal is political, [and/or] intersectionality in her analysis of gender practices?

- How does Connell define masculinity? What is the masculine or patriarchal dividend? What is hegemonic masculinity? What features of Gramsci’s definition of hegemony does Connell draw on in her theory?

- What key components of the relationships among masculinities does Connell identify? How does violence play into the social processes configuring the gender order in general and masculinity is particular?

- Compare and contrast Connell’s concept of the masculine dividend with Hartmann’s definition of patriarchy, Kandiyoti’s patriarchal bargain, [and/or] Wittig’s myth of woman. How does Connell extend their analysis(es)?

Boundaries and Belongings

27. Donna Kate Rushin, “The Bridge Poem”

- What metaphor does Rushin use to express her sense of her position in the world? How does the poem exemplify feminist-of-color poetics as discussed by Reed?

- Compare and contrast the imagery Rushin uses with that of Rukeyser and Akiko.

- How does Jordan locate herself temporally, historically, and geographically? What events/moments amplify her consciousness of race, class, and gender? What becomes visible to her in those moments? How does her analysis of these moments help to extend our understanding of intersectionality?

- Explain the following quotation: “Yes: race and class and gender remain as real as the weather. But what they must mean about the contact between two individuals is less obvious and, like the weather, not predictable.”

- What are the bases of connection and conflict with others that she explores in the essay? How do the bases of connection shift throughout the essay? What is the basis of connection that she finally settles on as necessary to make social change?

- How does Jordan’s essay exemplify how intersectionality “expands the horizon” of feminist knowledge building?

29. Minnie Bruce Pratt, “Identity: Skin, Blood, Heart”

- How does Pratt situate herself in time and space? Reflecting on her memory of going to the top of the Courthouse, what does she learn about how frames of perception are constructed? How does that site/sight of privilege construct a “constricted eye”?

- For Pratt, what moved her to “walk into change” from privilege? Does she bring anything along as she “walk[s] into change”? In her estimation, what is lost when we come to see our privilege? What is gained?

- What insights about the challenges of putting theory into practice does she identify? The essay ends with the declaration “not in my name.” What does she mean?

- Compare and contrast Pratt’s self-reflection to that of Jordan’s. Does Pratt’s self-reflection
participate in the kind of self-reflection Jordan recommends? If so, in what ways?

30. Audre Lorde, “I am Your Sister: Black Women Organizing Across Sexualities”

- How does Lorde define homophobia and heterosexism? How does she disrupt the reasons given for the exclusion of lesbians from the Black community? In Lorde’s view, what is the basis of common cause between Black lesbians and straight Black women? Where does Lorde locate the threat to Black women?

- How does Lorde use the metaphor of family to lay claim to her political belonging to the Black community? What might Sinha say about Lorde’s use of familial imagery?

- How does her litany of statements about her activism while being a Black lesbian establish her claim of belonging? How does the litany of other Black gays and lesbians help to establish her claim to belong to the Black nation?

- Jordan, Lorde, and Pratt each discuss issues of seeing and being seen, and of speaking and listening. How are their arguments similar and different?


- What insights about the intersections of gender, race, and sexuality are gained through Cantú’s reflection on his experiences as an expert witness in political asylum hearings?

- How does the U.S. process for reviewing political asylum claims conflate gender and sexuality? How are nationalism and heterosexuality constructed in the hearing process?

- How does the hearing process reaffirm the “American” narratives of both its progressiveness, and Mexico’s backwardness? What gestures are required of asylum seekers to “win” their cases? What happens to lesbians in the configuration of the ideal asylee?

- In your view, would Connell consider the asylum hearing as another instance that
demonstrates the masculinity and heteronormativity of the state? Would Sinha consider the
hearing process to be an example of gendered nationalist practice? Why/why not?
- How does Cantú’s analysis of sexual identity in the borderlands compare with Parreñas’
analysis of identity dislocation among migrant workers?

32. Leila Ahmed, “The Veil Debate—Again”
- What are the three “master narratives” of the veil identified by Ahmed? What are the
  specific historical connections among these three master narratives? Why, in her view, do
  these three narratives provide “the scaffolding of the veil’s meaning in our times”?
- What are the new meanings of the veil being articulated by young women in the U.S.? How
  is this different from its meanings in situations where it is required by law, such as Saudi
  Arabia and Iran? In Ahmed’s view, how is the narrative expressed by young women
  wearing hijab in the U.S. already marked by colonial discourse of civilization and progress?
- How does Ahmed interpret statements by young women about the choice to veil? Is the
  current practice a “return of the veil” or something new in her estimation? What is the
  importance of justice in the new meanings in her estimation?
- How does veiling represent national membership and belonging as Sinha defined them?
- Compare and contrast Ahmed’s account of debates about the veil and Abu-Lughod’s
  account of the dilemmas of Middle East Feminism. Do they illuminate similar or different
  challenges/choices?

33. Obioma Nnaemeka, “Forward: Locating Feminisms/Feminists”
- How does Nnaemeka use the analogy of Igbo masquerade to illustrate feminist engagement
  nationally and globally? How does the chameleon serve as a model for feminist
engagement?
- Why does she call for a re-examination of the “race factor” in feminist theory? Why does she reject the category ‘women of color’?
- How does Nnaemeka define the politics of location? What new questions and demands are posed by African women “throwing their rock of feminist will into the feminist pool”?
- How does naming “sustain the dynamism and expand the horizons of feminism”? What does she mean when she says “naming feminism is an act (agency) of resistance”? How do naming and location converge?
- How does she define negofeminism? What might members of the Combahee River Collective [and/or] June Jordan say about Nnaemeka’s analysis of race, location, and identity politics?

Section III Theorizing Feminist Knowledge and Agency
- What intellectual genealogy of standpoint theory do the editors provide in the Section Introduction? What conversations do the editors argue that feminist standpoint theories belong to?
- What intellectual genealogy of poststructuralist feminism do the editors provide in the Section Introduction? What conversations do the editors argue that poststructuralist feminist theories belong to?
- **As a section review**, ask students to review the differing conceptualizations of identity, subjectivity, [and/or] agency offered between standpoint and poststructuralist theorists.
- **As a section review**, ask students to sort the theorists according to their arguments about epistemological privilege of subordinate groups.
- **As a section review**, ask students to put Section III authors into conversation with Section II authors.
Standpoints and Situational Knowledge

34. Nancy C. M. Hartsock, “The Feminist Standpoint: Toward a Specifically Feminist Historical Materialism”

- What are the five claims that constitute Hartsock’s feminist standpoint? How do these claims rest on Marx’s theory of class consciousness and Hartmann’s earlier analysis of the sex/gender system?
- In her view, what are the epistemological consequences of the sexual division of labor? In Hartsock’s view, how does the sexual division of labor provide a privileged vantage point from which to analyze social relations of gender?
- How is a feminist standpoint different from Marx’s proletariat standpoint? What is the double aspect of women’s institutionalized activity/experiences? What are the liberatory possibilities in women’s experiences? In your view, does she rely on an essentialist view of women’s experiences? Why/why not?
- In Hartsock’s analysis, how does socialization configure different personalities and perspectives of women and men? What is the basis of masculinity and why is it abstract? Why do patriarchal institutions and ideologies take deadly forms?
- Compare and contrast the conceptualization of the gender order and of masculinity articulated by Hartsock and Connell. What precepts do they share, and where are their frameworks different?
- What comparisons does she make between abstract masculinity and capitalism? How does this comparison build on Hartmann’s earlier analysis?

35. Patricia Hill Collins, “Defining Black Feminist Thought”

- What two interrelated tensions shape the definition of Black feminism in Hill Collins’s view?
How does her concept of a Black feminist standpoint resolve the definitional problems that she identifies?

- What are the five core themes of Black feminist thought identified by Hill Collins? How are experience and consciousness [and/or] thought and action interrelated for Hill Collins? How are consciousness and struggle interrelated? How does she incorporate the “legacy of struggle” into her essay?

- Does she see coalitions across differences as possible and useful? If so, what are the features of such coalitions?

- Why is self-definition important for Hill Collins? What resources can be used for constructing self-definitions? How does her analysis build on the earlier arguments of the Combahee River Collective and Jordan?

- What does Hill Collins have to say about the claim of epistemic privilege by feminist standpoint theories such as Hartsock’s? How is her concept of a standpoint similar to, and different from Hartsock’s?

- How does Hill Collins’s standpoint compare to Haraway’s concept of situated knowledges and Mohanty’s comparative feminist analysis?

36. Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “‘Under Western Eyes’ Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles”

- How does Mohanty describe the context of and her goals in the original essay? Why does Mohanty revisit her original essay? Why does she say that it was “misread as postmodern”? How does she see the importance of differences and commonalities in this essay?

- How does she define the politics of location in her current essay? What nomenclature does she recommend in place of local/global, and why? How does she understand the
configuration of local/global agency in the three curricular approaches to globalization in women’s studies classrooms?

- How has the shifting political economy altered how she views the local/global landscape? How does the case of biopiracy in India demonstrate the connections of the “micropolitics of everyday life” and “the macropolitics of global restructuring? How does she draw on historical materialism in her argument?

- How does she define comparative feminist analysis? Why, in her view, is it the most useful and productive method? How does it bring experience, location, and history into focus? Do you think Mohanty would categorize the analysis provided by Parreñas and/or Leila Ahmed as examples of comparative feminist analysis? Why/why not?

- What feminist principles does she assemble under the heading of anticapitalist, transnational feminist practice? What does she mean by the concept of “feminism without borders”?

- How does she conceptualize solidarity for feminist theorizing and struggle? What might a common feminist political project look like for Mohanty?

- What is her position on the claim of epistemic privilege and the epistemic effects of social location? Compare and contrast her view of epistemic privilege with that of Hartsock and Hill Collins. Where might they agree/disagree?


- According to Cohen, what has limited the success of queerness as a transformative politics? In what ways does she think intersectional analysis helps address these limitations?

- How does intersectional analysis allow us to see the commonalities between non-normative forms of sexuality and queer politics?
- According to Cohen, what are the necessary elements of a truly transformative politics?

- Cohen makes a distinction between her desire to destabilize identity categories and their destruction. In what ways is this distinction important to her argument?

- Cohen says: “I envision a politics where one’s relation to power, and not some homogenized identity, is privileged in determining one’s political comrades.” Place this statement in conversation with Smith’s discussion of hetero-patriarchy and describe how their arguments intersect and differ.

- Place Nash and Cohen in conversation. Does Cohen’s argument overcome the key weaknesses of intersectional theory as described by Nash?

- How does Cohen draw on and expand feminist of color theory? Explain how/why your chosen quotations are illustrative.

- Compare and contrast her view of epistemic privilege of subordinated groups with that of Jaggar [and/or] Haraway.

38. Cherrie Moraga, “The Welder”

- What does Moraga mean when she talks about the capacity of heat to change the shape of things?

- What point is the poem making about both the challenges and opportunities of coalition politics?

**Subject Formation and Performativity**

39. Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective”

- In Haraway’s view what are the strengths and limitations of Marxist standpoint theories and
post-structural theories? How does Haraway utilize Hartsock’s notion of abstract masculinity and/or post-structural theories to reconceptualize identity politics? How does she incorporate embodiment into her analysis?

- What is the “God trick” for Haraway? Why is it problematic? What does Haraway mean when she says, “the only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular”? What does she mean when she says, “rational knowledge is a power-sensitive conversation”? How do these sentences support her claim to a feminist objectivity? What are its features?

- How does she understand the vantage point of the subjugated? What does she make of the claim to epistemic privilege in oppression? How does she use the concept of “passionate detachment” to lessen the danger of a romanticized notion of the epistemic privilege of oppression?

- What is her critique of the nature/culture opposition? How does she therefore conceptualize the world? Is it simply an object, in her view? Is it an agent? If so, what kind of agent?

- How do Haraway’s notions of “partial connection” and “situated knowledge” serve as alternatives to the relativism of post-structural theories and essentialism of identity politics?

- Compare and contrast Haraway’s concept of partial connection with Michelle Rowley’s concept of whereabouts unknown, how might they be compatible/incompatible?

40. Lata Mani, “Multiple Mediations: Feminist Scholarship in the Age of Multinational Reception”

- How does Mani define the concept of “the politics of location,” and how does she use the opening story to exemplify this concept? How does Mani define hybridity? Why does she warn that this concept can dodge the question of location?

- How does Mani define the concept of “the temporality of struggle”? How does this concept capture the complex articulations of location, time, and gender that shape the production and
reception of feminist scholarship?

- What are the differing interpretations of calling something colonial [and/or] timeless tradition in India, Britain, and U.S., according to Mani? How do these examples illustrate the importance of “discrepant audiences” for transnational feminist scholars?

- What does Mani mean when she says women provide the “ground for the development of other agendas”? How, then, in her view, are debates about women’s rights struggles over community autonomy and self-determination?

- What are the four positions in the Indian debates about the meaning of Roop Kanwar’s death? How is each related to the tropes and the logics of colonialism? How is the Indian feminist response different? What lessons does she draw from the debates about Roop Kanwar’s death about how feminist scholars should situate their political interventions?

- In Mani’s view, how does framing agency as consent foreclose broader discussion of women’s agency? Compare Mani and Miriam on the question of consent. Would they agree about its limitations for theorizing women’s agency?

- Compare and contrast temporalities of struggle in Mani and in Leila Ahmed’s meditation on the current debates about the veil. How do culture, tradition, and colonialism figure in each case?

- Compare and contrast Mani [and/or] Mohanty, L. Ahmed, Nnaemeka. What are the similarities and differences in how each theorist conceptualizes the politics of location in a post-colonial, transnational world?

41. Sandra Lee Bartky, “Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power”

- How does Bartky define the Foucauldian concept, “discipline of the body”? How does this discipline partition bodies, time, space, [and/or] movement in its production? How does Bartky utilize Foucault’s concepts in her analysis of the modality of feminine embodiment?
- What kind of feminine body is the normative ideal today? What is Bartky’s critique of this normative femininity? In her view, how do contemporary modes of feminine embodiment modernize patriarchal domination?

- What is “the docile body”? How does the Panopticon demonstrate the concept of the docile body? How does Foucault’s analysis of the Panopticon illuminate discourses and practices of “self-mastery” as the “dark side of modern individualism”? Who are the disciplinarians in the modern feminine project?

- What is the impact of “unbounded” discipline on femininity? How are women’s subjectivities structured within this project? What is the relationship of identity and mastery in Bartky’s view?

- In Bartky’s analysis, how is the disciplining project of femininity a setup of shame and self-discipline? How are race, gender, and institutionalized heterosexuality likewise incorporated into the project of modern femininity?

- Why does Barky conclude that normative femininity demonstrates that modernization of power has increasingly focused on the body? How does Bartky’s analysis of feminine discipline “flesh out” Firestone’s concept about sexual privatization and the culture of romance?


- How does Butler define gender? How does she define the gender binary? What are the risks for feminist theorizing relying on sexual difference as a starting point?

- How is the gender binary related to the heterosexual contract? How is it related to her claim that “sex is regulatory ideal”? In Butler’s analysis, how does heterosexuality produce sex, gender, and sexuality?
- How does Butler interpret de Beauvoir’s claim that “‘woman’ is a historical situation and not a natural fact”? What does Butler mean when she says, “one does one’s body”? What is the doing of gender?

- What does she mean when she says, “social agents constitute reality through language, gesture, and symbolic social sign”? How is gender constructed in acts?

- How does Butler define gender performativity? What does she mean when she says that gender performances are performative? Is performativity the same thing as theatrical acting? How/how not? How does Butler distinguish gender performativity from gender expression?

- What is the social purpose of repetitious and ritualized performance of binary genders, in her view? How can a different kind of repeating be transformative? Will gender exist in her changed world?

- How does Butler conceptualize gendered embodiment? Compare Butler’s, Bartky’s, and Haraway’s analysis of embodiment.

- As Hartsock notes, Marx famously said, “as people express their lives, so they are.” Compare and contrast the interpretations of the relationship between activity, identity, and agency in Butler and Hartsock.

- What does Butler mean when she says that gender performance produces the “illusion of an abiding gendered self”? In other words, what is Butler’s critique of the modernist concept of identity [and/or] experience? What is Butler’s critique of concepts of experience and the personal in feminist theory?

Section IV: Imagine Otherwise/Solidarity Considered

- What theorists do the editors draw on in their discussion of the section title, Imagine Otherwise?
How do they use this concept to encourage readers to assume theoretical and methodological openness?

What is the genealogy of affect theory that the editors provide in the Section Introduction? What conversations do the editors argue that feminist affect theory draws on?

As a section review, ask students to evaluate if and how the readings offer effective ways to incorporate both standpoint and postmodernist insights into feminist conceptualization of gender, difference, women’s experiences, the personal is political, and intersectionality.

As a section review, ask students to evaluate if and how the readings offer effective ways to incorporate both standpoint and postmodernist insights into feminist conceptualizations of agency, social location, and activism.

Bodies and Affects


What is Jaggar’s account of the separation of reason and emotion in positivist science? What limited role do emotions have in positivism? Does she accept this “dumb view” of emotions? Why not?

How does she define emotions? How are emotions socially constructed? How are they “active engagements”? In her view, how are emotions and values related? How are values, emotions, and observation linked?

How does her definition of emotions and values demonstrate the “myth of disinterested inquiry” that undergirds the scientific method? In her view, why does the scientific method NOT guarantee that emotions are removed from research? What is the ideological and political function of the “myth of disinterested inquiry”?

How does she define “emotional hegemony,” “emotional subversion,” and “outlaw
emotions”? How do social norms configure hegemonic and outlaw emotions? How does emotional hegemony “blinker us theoretically”?

- What relationship does she posit between outlaw emotions and feminist theory building? Why, in her view, should we trust the emotions/insights of the subjugated? What is the role of self-reflexivity in feminist knowledge-building, according to Jaggar? How can feminist theory re-educate our emotions?

- Compare and contrast the concept of standpoint used by Hartsock, Hill Collins, and Jaggar. How are they similar? How are they different? What is the basis of knowledge in each? How does Jaggar’s analysis of emotions extend our understanding of standpoints?

- Compare and contrast the concept of epistemological privilege used by Jaggar, Cohen, and Haraway. How are they similar and different? On what is their conception of privilege based?

44. Kathy Davis, “Reclaiming Women’s Bodies: Colonialist Trope or Critical Epistemology?”

- What is her account of the development of recent feminist theory of the body? Why does she critique the separation of feminist theorizing about the body and feminist health activism? How does the classic book *Our Bodies, Ourselves (OBOS)* contribute to the feminist epistemological project regarding the body?

- How are the gendered body, experiential knowledge, agency, [and/or] empowerment conceptualized in *OBOS*, according to Davis? What contributions to the conversation/debates about bio-determinism, essentialism and difference does Davis argue *OBOS* can make? In her view, how does *OBOS* avoid bio-determinism? How can it address the problem of essentialism?

- What theorists does Davis draw on to build her argument regarding experiential knowledge? How, in her view, does *OBOS* build experiential knowledge of the body while accounting for
the postmodern critique of the concept of women’s experience?

- What does Davis mean by a “theory in the flesh”? What theorists does her definition draw on? How can OBOS help us build such a theory? How does she define “sentient situated knowledge”? How can it provide a theory in the flesh?

- How does OBOS explore the “material effects of social location” on embodied experiences? How does OBOS provide “an imaginative entry” into the experiences of different women? How, then, can the epistemological project of OBOS travel?

- Compare and contrast how Davis, Jaggar, Cohen, and Haraway theorize the relations of knowledge and power? How do their definitions of “epistemic agency,” embodiment, [and/or] empowerment compare?

45. Sara Ahmed, “Multiculturalism and the Promise of Happiness”

- According to Ahmed, what is the “promise of happiness,” and how does it “direct us towards certain objects”? How do these objects circulate as social goods?

- According to Ahmed, why is the happy housewife a “fantasy figure”? What does this figure conceal? How is the “crisis of happiness” organized by the regulatory effects of social beliefs?

- How does she define her concept of affective alignment and affective alienation in the circulation of social goods? In her analysis, how does football restore social hope? How is football “proximate to the ego ideal of the nation”?

- What are “sticky” objects, why are they sticky? In her account, are good and bad feelings evenly distributed? How do conversions of good to bad and bad to good feelings happen, and how does the narrative of the movie Bend it Like Beckham depend on such conversions?

- How does the feminist killjoy kill joy? How does Ahmed draw on the work of Marilyn Frye
and Audre Lorde to help us understand how the figure of the “feminist killjoy” and “angry black woman” become the origin of bad feelings?

- How does she use Halberstam’s concept of the temporality of the family to ground her argument that “queer life” is “already constructed as an unhappy life”?

- Ahmed uses a play on words between the sentiment, “I just want you to be happy” and social justice in the phrase, “just happiness.” That is, this wordplay illuminates the ideological commitments of the film *Bend it Like Beckham*. Where does the image of freedom in the film take us? What does football signify in the film? What does proximity to the white man signify?

- According to Ahmed, what are the conversion points of bad to good feelings in the film *Bend it Like Beckham*? How do the melancholic migrant, the could-be lesbians, and the straight white man figure in these conversions? According to Ahmed how do assumptions about the open good and closed bad feelings allow injustice to disappear?

- Compare and contrast Jaggar’s concept of outlaw emotions with Ahmed’s concept of affective alignment. How are they similar and different? How do these concepts help feminists understand gendered agency and the cultural politics of emotion?

46. **Bettina Judd, “In 2006 I Had an Ordeal with Medicine”**

- What does the speaker learn from her body through her “ordeal with medicine”?

- What does she mean when she says: “A house can be a dynasty, a bloodline, a body.”

- What is the significance of the ghosts in this poem? What/who do they represent?

### Solidarity Reconsidered

47. **Paula M. L. Moya, “Chicana Feminism and Postmodernist Theory”**
- How does Moya define post-positivist realism? How does it differ from positivism? How does she use this concept to reconceptualize identity and experience? How does she use it to reconceptualize knowledge, truth, reality, [and/or] objectivity?

- What is the problem of justification and why is it important for Moya? How can we assess truth within a post-positivist realist perspective? What does Moya mean when she argues, “rather than refusing to ground our politics, we need to ask what grounds might, in fact, be worth defending”?

- What is the historical narrative of Chicana feminist theorizing in Moya’s analysis? How does Chicana feminist theory illuminate the value of post-positivist realism for feminist theorizing in general?

- How does Moya define Chela Sandoval’s concept of oppositional consciousness? What limitations does she see in Sandoval’s concept? How does she extend Sandoval’s concept through the principles of post-positivist realism? What are the key features of women of color feminism that makes it possible to work across difference?

- How does Moya define identity? Why is identity significant for Moya? How does she link social location and identity in theorizing the process of identity formation? How does she define experiential knowledge? How does she use and extend Anzaldúa’s concept of la facultad?

- What is Moya’s perspective on the question of the epistemic privilege of the oppressed? How does she weigh the possibility of error in women of color theorizing? Why is it important to consider alternative versions of truth?

- What is the role of emotion in women of color theorizing, and how can it point to a liberatory future? How does the example of Cherríe Moraga illuminate that role? What are the similarities and differences between Moya’s concept of emotions in feminist theorizing and
that of Jaggar?

- What are the similarities and differences between Moya’s post-positivist realism, Haraway’s situated knowledge, [and/or] Davis’s sentient situated knowledge? What are the similarities and differences in Haraway’s, Davis’s, and Moya’s perspectives on the question of objective reality?

- Compare and contrast Mani, Parreñas, Mohanty, and Moya on the politics of location. How do their analyses help us understand the contradictory forces shaping transnational feminist subjectivity?


- What are the competing stories and silences about Korean Japanese Military Comfort Women described by Lee? How do the comfort women survivors become national activists? What lessons can be learned from considering their struggles?

- How do the comfort women survivors become transnational activists? What lessons can be learned from considering South–South feminist networks?

- Thinking back to the complex relationship between gender and nation outlined by Sinha, what aspects of the gendering of nations are illuminated by Lee’s account of comfort women in Korea?

- Compare and contrast how gender and nation intersect in the comfort women’s movement as described by Lee with the intersection of gender and Muslim identity in the veil debate by

- How does their concept of “intimate labor” bridge feminist debates about sex work, care work, and domestic work? What do these forms of work have in common? Why do they argue it is important to theorize the three together?

- What argument are the authors making about “intimate labor” and its relationship to patriarchy? To capitalism?

- What might Hartmann say about their argument? What might Mohanty say?

- What similarities and differences do you see between this essay and Parreñas’ previous essay?

- What relationship do you see between the arguments in this essay and Smith’s three pillars of white supremacy? What are the intersections of their arguments?

- What are the tensions and contestations between Boris and Parreñas’ definition of intimate labor and Miriam’s critique of consent to sex work?

- What lessons can be learned from this essay about developing effective local coalitions? Effective transnational coalitions?

50. Jasbir Puar, “‘I Would Rather be a Cyborg than a Goddess’: Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory”

- How does Puar define the concepts of intersectionality and assemblage? How does the “friction” between them help us theorize the various situations of women/structures of oppressive social relations? What does assemblage focus our attention on that Puar claims is
- What is significant about Puar’s rereading of Crenshaw’s original, formative concept of intersectionality, particularly its metaphorical link to the traffic intersection? How does Puar’s rereading illuminate the limitations of this methodology?

- What “epistemological correctives” does Puar suggest? How do her correctives make use of affect theory?

- Why does she want us to ask the question: What do assemblages do? Elaborate on how she uses the concept of performativity to challenge representational politics? How does affective intensification play into this? In your response, consider her example of gender, violence, and football games.

- How does neoliberal pluralism and accommodations of difference limit the value of intersectional theory, according to Puar?

- What does Puar mean by the “epistemic violence” in our current theories?

- Put Puar and Nash into conversation. What are the similarities and differences in their interventions in intersectional methodology?

- Put Puar and Patil into conversation. What are the similarities and differences in their interventions in intersectional methodology?


- According to Namaste, have transsexual women been served by asking the Transgender Question? Why or why not?

- Namaste argues that while Butler wants to undo gender, we also need to undo theory. Why?

- What challenges does Namaste offer to what she terms the primacy of gender in Butler’s
analysis? What does Namaste see as significant about considering work or labor in developing a richer understanding of transsexual women? How might Hartmann’s and Parreñas’ analysis of work help us understand Namaste’s argument?

- How does Jaggar help us understand Namaste’s challenge to empiricism?

- Namaste critiques feminist theory’s use of the transgender body to address feminist questions and argues for situated investigation of Trans lives. Kathy Davis critiques feminist body theory for being disembodied and argues for OBOS as a corrective. First summarize each author’s argument. Then consider on what points Namaste and Davis might agree.

- Place Namaste, Jaggar, Cohen, [and/or] Haraway in conversation. Highlight the intersections, similarities, and differences in their arguments around building coalition politics.

52. Angela McRobbie, “Beyond Post-Feminism”

- In McRobbie’s view, how has the new gender regime taken into account the supposed gains of “second wave feminism” and recast the feminist subject in individual rather than collective terms? How has the media and popular culture participated in this redefinition? In what ways has this stalled the work of the feminist movement and suggested its contemporary irrelevance?

- Describe this new, normative feminist subject, the contemporary young woman, according to McRobbie. How does her image support the agenda of the neoliberal state and economy?

- In your view, is this new normative feminist subject an update of Wittig’s myth of woman? Why or why not? Is it a new patriarchal bargain? Why or why not? Did it resolve the crisis of patriarchy caused by mid-twentieth century feminism? Why or why not?

- How can McRobbie’s articulation of “post-feminism” expand our understanding of neoliberalism in the contemporary moment?
In what ways can Sara Ahmed’s discussion of affective alignment in “the promise of happiness” help us better understand the change McRobbie describes in popular and political discourse and its impact on contemporary feminism and the feminist subject?


- What metaphors does Ndlovu use to express the situation of women? What does the wordplay of the title convey?
- What affects are conveyed in this poem?
- How does recognition figure into the poem? How does this recognition resonate with the politics of naming that Nnaemeka argues for?
- How does the poem use and extend the feminist poetics Reed discusses? Might he consider this an example of third wave poetics?
- Thinking back to the 1911 poem by Akiko, what themes of women’s movement resonate with Ndlovu’s 2003 poem?